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## CHAPTER IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP SOLICITATION



Crawfish Frog, *Lithobates areolatus*

## IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWAP, THE DFW SOUGHT TO EXPAND PUBLIC AND PARTNER PARTICIPATION.

*A participation framework provided guidelines for including partners at various levels of involvement. Potential partners were engaged through a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach.*

A weakness identified by the Core Team in the 2005 CWS was the lack of participation and buy-in from the public and partners. In the development of the SWAP, the Core Team realized early on that partner involvement would vary based on interest, resources, and goals. A participation framework provided guidelines for including partners at various levels of involvement. Potential partners were engaged through a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. By using a host of interactive methods, partners were able to check-in and participate at any point throughout the process. The main avenue for interested partners to gain information was through the SWAP website ([www.swap.dnr.in.gov](http://www.swap.dnr.in.gov)).

## ADVISORY TEAM

The Advisory Team was organized to serve as a sounding board, information source, and disseminator of SWAP for the Core Team. Participation by the Advisory board was frequent throughout with in-person meetings (generally every two to four months), emails, and phone calls over two years. The following were identified as key partners and were invited to participate on the Advisory Team:

### A. Federal Agencies

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- U.S. National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

### B. State Agencies

- Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)
- Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)
- Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
- Purdue University
- Indiana University

### C. Organizations

- Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF)
- Ducks Unlimited (DU)
- Indiana Farm Bureau (IFB)
- Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Duke Energy
- Pheasants Forever (PF)
- National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)
- Indiana Forest & Woodlands Owners Association (IFWOA)
- American Electric Power (AEP)

### D. Indian Tribes

There are no federally recognized Indian tribes in Indiana.

## CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

### Initial Scoping Phase

In order to engage more partners, the Core Team revisited a comprehensive list of some 570 potential partners generated for the CWS. This list was the starting point for partner identification in the 2015 revision. The list was expanded to 760 potential partners based on recommendations from the Core Team, Advisory Team, and an online organization survey.

The online Conservation Organization Survey was created and distributed in November of 2013 to all potential partners and made available to the public in order to gather information about conservation goals, areas of the state, and the types of habitats in which they work, species of interest, and resources available. One representative was asked to fill out the survey for their organization. A total of 85 individuals participated in the survey from 74 different organizations. Two private landowners also participated in the survey (Appendix Q).

In the summer of 2013, the DFW hired Indiana University's Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands to provide recommendations for technical data collection and ways to continue partner involvement throughout the revision process. The Eppley Institute organized and facilitated three regional kick-off partner meetings in Indianapolis, Corydon, and Lakeville, and a web-based meeting (webinar) in early fall of 2013. Personal invitations were sent via email to the 760 identified potential partners. Press releases, websites, and other media outlets were also utilized to publicize the events. A total of 150 participants attended a regional meeting, and 21 participated via the webinar. The Eppley Institute also conducted a follow-up meeting to provide a comprehensive overview of the initial meetings.

From information gathered at the meetings, the Eppley Institute concluded a mixed-method approach (technical surveys, in-person meetings, social media, and electronic/virtual discussion forums) was needed to maximize stakeholder engagement and increase involvement (Appendix T).

### Technical and Data Gathering Phase

In the spring of 2014, the DFW hired Purdue University's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources to work with the Core Team in the SWAP revision process to:

1. Update the baseline data obtained in the CWS for SGCN and habitats
2. Incorporate planning regions
3. Determine threats and the associated actions for SGCN and their habitats
4. Develop a system to prioritize these actions
5. Establish a system to monitor the effectiveness of these actions

Prior to Purdue University releasing their online technical surveys, two focus groups were convened in April and June of 2014. These focus groups included

members of the Core Team, Advisory Team, and species technical experts. The purpose of the first focus group was to discuss and identify potential threats to SGCN and their habitats in Indiana over the next ten years and the conservation actions needed to address these threats (Appendix R). The threats and conservation actions identified by the focus group were then used to help develop and refine the technical surveys.

The purpose of the second focus group was to identify for each planning region the habitat types of interest, conservation actions likely to be implemented to conserve these habitats over the next ten years, and pool of candidate indicator species to refine the focus of landscape-level modeling. Results from this second focus group can be found in Appendix S.

The first technical survey, the Species Survey, was geared towards SGCN experts and was initiated on July 11, 2014. Experts were considered those individuals who work extensively with SGCN or have a depth of knowledge of them and/or their associated habitats. A total of 166 individuals participated in the survey, providing a total of 486 useable species responses covering 110 different species (Appendix O).

The second technical survey, the Habitat Survey, targeted people, agencies, and organizations that managed or had knowledge about habitats in Indiana, and was initiated on August 11, 2014. In order to better engage partners that maintain a more regional focus, the survey was organized by Indiana planning regions. Survey participants could complete the survey for those regions they felt were pertinent to them. The survey link was sent to 974 conservation professionals, stakeholders, species experts, property managers, and property owners. A total of 362 individuals participated in the survey, providing a total of 257 respondents providing useable answers, covering 827 region habitat combinations (Appendix P).

### Public Collaboration

Throughout the development of the SWAP, members of the public were invited to participate in several ways. The DFW created a website ([www.swap.dnr.in.gov](http://www.swap.dnr.in.gov)) to communicate pertinent updates as needed. The initial scoping phase and the online surveys were made available to all who wished to participate. Emails and phone calls were additional ways to reach DFW staff to provide feedback.

In order to present the vast amount of data generated from the two surveys and to discuss the results with partners, the DFW and Purdue University hosted six regional stakeholder meetings in September and October of 2014. Again, these meetings were made available to anyone interested, partners and members of the public alike. The results from the Species and Habitat Surveys were presented, and stakeholders had opportunities to comment and ask questions. The meetings were held in close proximity to the planning regions in Plymouth, Noblesville, Butlerville, and Bicknell. Attendance at the six meetings ranged from 16 to 30 people. A total of 136 people attended the meetings with more than 20 organizations and several landowners represented. For those who could not attend the regional stakeholder

meetings, results were and a public comment form were available on the SWAP website.

A full draft of the SWAP revision was placed on the DFW website for final commenting on 8/28/15. This allowed members of the Advisory Team, DFW staff, the rest of the conservation community and members of the public to comment and provide feedback prior to final completion of the SWAP. Most comments received in this final period were questions about errors that were ultimately corrected. There were also several comments relating to the COA map; generally about the inclusion/exclusion of areas. Several comments were specific to the commenting organizations and were addressed individually. Further, as noted in the SWAP, the COA map is not intended to be static and may evolve during implementation to address concerns as it relates to the SWAP criteria and process. Other significant comments relating specifically to more detailed actions will be incorporated into the implementation plan for the SWAP.